LABOUR MONTHLY

1s.

EDITOR · R PALME DUTT

The Labour Party Conference

i. K. Zilliacus, M.P.

ii. Harold Davies, M.P.

Problems of Production

i. Andrew Naesmith

ii. Reg. Birch

iii. C. R. Hobson, M.P.

United States and World Trade

J. R. Campbell

India R. Palme Dutt

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Fruits of Margate

THE bill for Margate is coming in. The price is likely to be heavy both for Britain and the world. It is true that the Margate Labour Party Conference was no longer as light-hearted as Bournemouth a year earlier in blandly ignoring the crisis confronting Britain amid a sunshine atmosphere of rosy illusions and self-congratulation. On the contrary, the ministerial speeches at Margate were full of grim and gloomy prognostications of the desperate economic situation, the necessity to prepare for more shortages and postpone demands for improved conditions, and appeals to their followers to avoid divisions and maintain confidence in the Government. But Margate failed to offer any solution for the problems of the crisis. Margate completely failed to tackle the causes of the crisis. Apart from two important positive decisions on wages policy, and a creditable minority vote on man-power, Margate failed even to attempt to evolve any comprehensive economic programme to replace the present chaos by planned development. Above all, Margate failed to deal with the tap-root of all Britain's present problems, the subordination of every issue of policy to the strategic demands of a Tory reactionary foreign policy, which is squandering Britain's resources and man-power, piling up a gigantic deficit in the balance of payments, crippling home reconstruction and home standards, alienating Britain's friends among the progressive peoples, and making Britain the catspaw of American aggressive reaction. Failure to change this policy cancelled and made ineffective any other progressive decisions. Hence Margate was a conference of lost opportunities. Margate will not be remembered with pride in the annals of the Labour movement.

Poisonous Fruits

Reaction throughout the world has drawn comfort and encouragement from Margate. It is not for nothing that Franco has drawn a deep sigh of relief at the result of Margate:

> The absence of any significant reference to Spain at the British Labour Party Conference, coming on top of the Anglo-Spanish monetary agreement and the known British resistance to any form of economic pressure, is taken in Madrid as evidence that the political danger has passed. (*Observer*, 1.6.47).

Anti-Soviet propaganda over Hungary, Bulgaria and other issues is stoked up to new heights. The Dutch full-scale military offensive with British-trained troops and British equipment is let loose against the Indonesian Republic. Progressive opinion in America and Europe is alarmed and concerned at the apparent weakness of the Left in Britain and the ovation given to a chauvinist tirade. American anti-democratic strategy, previously disconcerted at the opposition of world opinion to the Truman Doctrine, now judges the moment ripe after

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Margate to launch the Marshall Plan, nominally for European economic reconstruction, but which the reactionary advocates of the Truman Doctrine plainly hope to use for promoting a dollar-dominated Western European Bloc against democracy in Europe, with Western Germany as its main base, and Britain as the American agent to put it through. Bevin hastens to fulfil the role allotted him by Marshall with what the *New York Times* patronisingly calls "pathetic enthusiasm." At home the Cabinet, encouraged by Margate's response to Morrison's speech that the rich must not be taxed any more heavily (the currency cases have shown how poverty-stricken they are already) and that further burdens must fall on the workers, proceeds to discuss cuts in food imports and subsidies—not as a weapon to end dependence on the dollar (this talk was bluff for the Conference), but alongside further dependence on the dollar, as shown in the reception to the Marshall Plan, and as the necessary counterpart of a reactionary foreign policy, requiring cuts in the workers' standards. The fruits of Margate are likely to prove bitter; and organisations will have a right to demand a reckoning of their delegates.

Reasons of Right Wing Victory

Why did the Right Wing win at Margate? Three main reasons may be suggested. First, the very gravity of the crisis, and the dangerous and difficult situation in which the Government's policy had landed the country, made the delegates anxious to avoid divisions on major issues, confine the fight to special limited issues, and in general rally to the defence of the Government against the unscrupulous and rising offensive of reaction. For this reason the real feeling of the Conference was often shown in passing signs and references rather than in the votes (for example, the overwhelming applause when a speaker referred to the shame of continuing to support Franco—no vote was taken on this issue). The militant class feeling was revealed in the votes which defeated the Executive on special home issues, such as the tied cottages in agriculture or equal pay, while avoiding divisions on major policy. This method of approach, however, stultified even the secondary victories which were won. The demand for the immediate operation of equal pay in public employment was carried against the Executive by a four-fifths majority. But the Cabinet has immediately rejected this Conference decision, on the ground that it would cost £24 million with consequent dangers of inflation—an argument which only has weight on the basis of the assumption (unchallenged by the Conference) that £900 million or more than three times pre-war must be spent on the armed forces. Thus the failure of the Conference to tackle the major issue has cancelled out their success even on the minor issue.

Illusions on Foreign Policy

The second main reason was the widespread belief that the Government's foreign policy was already changing in the most recent

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period, to adopt a number of the measures advocated by the critics, and that it was therefore not necessary to pursue the fight against the old Churchill-Bevin policy any further. Important signs of new developments in foreign policy, such as the trade agreements concluded or nearing conclusion with Poland, Hungary and Rumania, bringing substantial benefits to Britain; Bevin's visit to Warsaw and his changed tone in reference to Poland; and the optimistic reports of the prospects of a large-scale British-Soviet trade agreement, all arising on the eve of the Conference (as well as the retreat on the length of time of military service), contributed to this impression. These new developments are important. They are evidence of that logic of necessity which we have repeatedly argued must sooner or later compel a change in British foreign policy. They are a first foretaste of the practical results which an alternative policy can bring. But the belief that they already represent a basic new orientation of policy is an illusion. "Cards on the Table" is the most damning proof of this.

The Devil's Picture Books

"Cards on the Table," which Zilliacus justly designated as "Crypto-Fulton-Winston," confirms every indictment the critics ever made. "Cards on the Table" breathes through every page hostility to the Soviet Union and the new democracies, cynical imperialist power-politics, and subservience to American reaction. And "Cards on the Table," which the Executive refused to repudiate and withdraw, remains the only comprehensive current statement of the Labour Government's foreign policy. Lest any Conference delegate should be in any doubt as to the character of the foreign policy which the Conference endorsed, Eden blew the gaff within a few days of the Conference by claiming it as Tory policy in his speech on June 6:

> Mr. Bevin's foreign policy differed little, if at all, from the policy which the Conservative Party would have pursued. It was all the more astonishing, therefore, to read in the recent Labour Party pamphlet "Cards on the Table" a series of statements which not only totally ignore the support which our party has given to the Government in its foreign policy, but which even suggest that, had we been in power, we should have pursued totally different aims.

The alliance of Toryism and Right Wing Labour on the basis of imperialist world policy is an old story. But its acceptance by the Labour Party Conference almost without a division is a serious matter in the present world situation.

No Change Yet

The fight to change the present line of policy is not less urgent than before. It is more urgent. In many important respects the situation has worsened, with the acceptance of the Truman Doctrine of American world domination in the interests of reaction, the Anglo-American economic fusion agreement in Germany, the holding up of the British-Soviet Treaty negotiations through objection to the

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clause against participation in hostile blocs, and now most recently the attitude to the Marshall Plan. Even the new trend of policy in Eastern Europe is two-sided, and contains also, alongside the progressive content of the economic agreements, the attempt, after the collapse of Mikolaczyk and similar forces, to find new forms of influencing the internal situation, developing economic relations in the hope of detaching these countries from the Soviet Union with the prospect of superior economic resources from the West, and building on the Socialist Parties to develop an oppositional role. The attack on the change of government in Hungary, MacNeill's outburst proclaiming an analogy with Hitler, and the noisy Press publicity to back the notorious Sulyok, the former White Terror officer and supporter of Horthy and Goemboes, as the "voice of democracy," demonstrate this danger. Most serious of all are the new developments in connection with the Marshall Plan.

The Marshall Plan

What is the strategy of the Marshall Plan? The *News-Chronicle* of June 16 solemnly declares that "only by acceptance of the Marshall Plan can the Truman Doctrine be killed stone dead." This is indeed to assume a highly eccentric mortal battle between the President and his Secretary of State—all the more odd in view of Marshall's known share in formulating the Truman Doctrine. This attempt to dress up the Marshall Plan for popular consumption as an enlightened non-political plan to assist European recovery with large-scale dollar credits will not stand up to the light of examination. The Marshall Plan, as originally propounded, proposed to utilise dollar credits in order to promote the Churchillian conception of "United Europe," i.e. the Western Bloc under American control. The dollar credits are to be granted on the basis of a programme "agreed to by a number, if not by all European nations"; and the United States is to have the right to determine which Governments to exclude: "any Government which manœuvres to block the recovery of other countries cannot expect help from us." This carries forward the familiar line of the Truman Doctrine. Asked if his Plan corresponded to Churchill's "United Europe" programme (actually the continuation of Hitler's Pan-Europe), Marshall replied sympathetically. *The Times* reported on June 7:

> The scheme has not gone so far as to list the European countries which would be expected to benefit from the dollar credits, but it is assumed that all Western countries would be included and that the scheme would embrace Poland and Czechoslovakia to the east."

Marshall's subsequent statement, a week after his original speech, that his Plan might cover all Europe "west of Asia," was an obvious diplomatic afterthought, intended to save appearances and prepare the way for endeavouring to throw on the Soviet Union responsibility for non-inclusion. But the general line was abundantly shown in the

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accompanying ferocious mud-slinging anti-Soviet speeches of Truman and Dean Acheson.

Uniting Europe or Splitting Europe?

The Marshall Plan was not generated in a vacuum. It is the continuation of preceding policy. On the opening of the Moscow Conference the Truman Doctrine was exploded like a bombshell to prepare the way for a breakdown and independent action in the West. This was averted by Soviet diplomacy, which secured an adjournment till November. The demand was then raised to establish immediately the Western German State; but this project met with obstacles, since it would place the entire sentiment of German national unity, as well as German democratic sentiment, in opposition to the Western Powers. Hence the concentration of the next stage of policy became to establish, not just Western Germany, but the Western Bloc with the Ruhr as its industrial centre under Anglo-American control. Dollar pressure was exerted to exclude the Communist Ministers from the French and Italian Governments. Then, when Margate had shown the position also prepared in Britain, the Marshall Plan was launched in the midst of an intensive anti-Soviet campaign. The "Western" interpretation was at once adopted by Bevin, who declared that Britain and France (under American orders) must take the initiative to organise Europe; approached France in the first place, and only later the Soviet Union; and further declared:

"France, Great Britain and the United States—almost in line geographically—have a great common interest."

Negotiations have only begun at the time of writing. Their further development will depend, not only on the aims of reaction, but on the role of the democratic movement in the European countries and in Britain. There is every need for a genuine plan of international economic co-operation which would facilitate the flow of dollar credits for reconstruction in Europe. But no dollar credits will assist European reconstruction if they are directed to promote political domination from outside against the democratic forces in the European countries.

The Problem of the Left

Hence the battle within the labour movement for the future of Britain and Europe is more intense and urgent now than at any moment since the war. But it is here that we come to the most important weakness which was revealed at Margate. The third main reason which contributed to the victory of the right wing was undoubtedly the division and confusion of leadership of the left as expressed in the Labour Party Conference. The Labour Party Conference is at present a distorted reflection of the working class movement, since it excludes the principal united leadership of the left, with a strong basis in the industrial working class, the Communist Party. So the contradiction arises that the more representative Trades Union Congress can register two and a half million votes against Bevin's

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policy, while the preceding and succeeding Labour Party Conferences appear to reveal a negligible opposition. The voicing of the left in the Labour Party Conference has to come from scattered individuals, mainly from among individual Members of Parliament, who represent very varying schools of thought, are often sharply divided among themselves, have no organic connection with the trade union movement, and are in consequence in a very weak and exposed position in face of threats of discipline against them. Every expression of opposition is met with the charge of " crypto-communism " by the right wing leadership. A section of the critics of the Government are so much intimidated by this charge that they endeavour to vie with the right wing in expressions of hostility to communism, the Soviet Union and the new democracies; only a small minority are strong and courageous enough to resist this intimidation. The resultant confusion of policy is considerable. The vacillating centre, eager to combine criticism of the Government's subservience to America with a sharp demarcation from the Soviet Union and communism, demand a mythical "social democratic" third alternative, which shall be equally separate from the United States and from the Soviet Union, from capitalism and from communism; and when they have to translate this myth into practice, they end up by advocating the same Western European bloc which is the aim of Bevin and Marshall. This weakness of leadership of the left facilitates the victory of the right wing in the Labour Party, which stages an easy "triumph" because the main forces of the left are excluded.

Towards Closer Co-operation

In consequence the only consistent expression of an alternative policy to that of the right wing leadership was made at Margate, not in the Labour Party Conference, but in the separate press conference addressed by Arthur Horner on behalf of the Communist Party. But it is precisely these issues that need to be democratically discussed and thrashed out in the labour movement as a whole. The response, alike in the workshops and in the industrial centres, and in the press, revealed the general recognition that here was in fact the alternative programme which embodied the aspirations of the left and which received only a partial expression in the proceedings of the conference. It should be the concern of all serious sections of the labour movement to strive to find the way to overcome this problem, so that the discussions of the main conference of the political labour movement shall genuinely reflect the currents of thought in the working class. And it is of especial and immediate concern that the path of closer co-operation and common understanding shall be found among all progressive sections of the labour movement, in order to end the continuance of policies which experience is proving disastrous, and to secure the necessary changes of policy which are essential to save the future of the labour movement and to save Britain.

June 17, 1947. R. P. D.

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LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

by K. ZILLIACUS, M.P.

MY general impression of the Margate Conference is that it showed the strength, confidence and vigour of the Labour Party; showed that the Party was more than half awake on home affairs, was stirring in its sleep as regards the vexed question of manpower in the forces, which is the point where foreign affairs and domestic issues join, but is still dreaming as regards world affairs. This spirit of confidence and sense of power of the Party, as displayed at the Conference, sent us all home in good heart. I think there is no doubt about it that we are going to win the next election and follow up the job we have begun in the first five years.

On the central issue of production and planning, the acceptance of the Miners' resolution on differential wages as an incentive to workers to enter under-manned industries was a first step towards a Socialist wage policy (to be distinguished from the Tory propaganda for freezing wages under the misleading title of "A National Wage Policy").

On the other hand, even this first step met with opposition from Arthur Deakin of the Transport and General Workers Union, who preached pure old-fashioned anarchy (and was out of touch with at least half his own delegation, who stood with Will Lawther on this issue). A resolution going further in facing the realities of the situation, and signed among others by the Amalgamated Engineering Union, was opposed by the National Executive Committee and withdrawn. It called not only for a wage policy but for something like a Minister of Production with powers to control the allocation of fuel and raw material according to priorities of industrial importance, and would have used the power to regulate the number of men an industry could employ in order to establish an indirect and negative form of the direction of labour.

A resolution calling for a review of our military commitments, in view of the fact that our influence in world affairs depended upon success in our economic and social reconstruction, and that we must cut the forces drastically in order to release the manpower necessary to succeed at home, was moved by Harold Davies and seconded by Ian Mikardo and Dick Crossman. In spite of the miners voting on this issue with the National Executive, the resolution scored over 1,100,000 votes, that is a solid one-third minority in the Conference.

The debates on home affairs and on manpower and the forces were conducted by platform and floor in terms of policy and with a sense of realism and responsibility. When it came to the life and death issue of foreign affairs, however, Mr. Bevin insisted upon and got away handsomely with the claim to treat the whole thing as a vote of confidence in, and a free hand and a blank cheque for, himself. It

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took 1931 to cure the Labour Party of the childhood disease of blind loyalty to its leaders in home affairs. Unless we grow up in time we and the world are going to pay a bitter price for a pre-1931 attitude in world affairs. The lesson of 1931 in Hugh Dalton's words was that

"It is easy to put most of the blame for what was done or not done on the three men who occupied key positions in the Government . . . but all of us I feel must take some share of the responsibility . . . We should have kicked up more row, been less loyal to leaders and more loyal to principles."

Those of us who believe that our present policy is losing the peace have got to keep on patiently explaining the facts of public life to our comrades and colleagues, and pouring the acid of reality into the rose water of humbug about our foreign policy until the resulting drink becomes too bitter for the workers of this country to swallow. That is not a pleasant or popular task. But it is salutary and necessary.

(ii)

by HAROLD DAVIES, M.P.

A MOVEMENT cannot be led without ideas, and from Conference ideas should come. Policy must be hammered out as the result of exchange of these ideas between the Executive, the Parliamentary Party and the Floor. But Conference as it is now constituted limits its own influence. The over-shadowing issue left unresolved was the one of the relationship of the Party to the Government.

Last year Laski said that full independence of the Party could only be maintained if it moved from the technique of the constitution built for opposition to the constitution built for sustaining the greatest Government of modern times. Six out of seven of the Constituency seats are occupied by Ministers on the strength of their votes. For the time being this may be a good thing, but in future this will be more than an academic question.

The industrial and political wings of the Party showed that they were both fully aware of the economic difficulties confronting them. But they both seemed afraid of annoying their enemies, meanwhile forgetting that it is important to encourage their friends. It was to be expected that there would be a cleavage on Wage Policy and Incentives for the under-manned industries. Until the entire membership of the Trade Union Movement discuss in their lodges and branches, on an informed and scientific basis, the full implications of a wages policy we cannot expect a Labour Conference to bulldoze its way over the protective machinery of Trade Unionism. Conference showed at least that the Trade Unions are prepared to discuss openly the difficulties of this transition period. This is a sign of strength, not weakness.

The case put up by the delegates who moved and supported the

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resolution on manpower and commitments was unanswerable. It was here that the *Keep Left* group came out strongest and obtained over a million votes. This group did not take up the challenge on foreign affairs. The resolution which they supported on the British Zone of Germany was accepted. Whatever weaknesses there may be in their pamphlet *Keep Left* this group are the first to try to offer real constructive alternatives to some sections of the Government's policy. They refuse to deal with any problem as an isolate. The press underestimated their influence.

Ernest Bevin, in a masterly histrionic effort, aided by the spotlights of the newsreel and the heat of the sun, hypnotised Conference into acquiescence. Conference must still face the uncomfortable fact that all the main social institutions of the State were constructed to protect the economic order that Labour must change.

Yet the delegates went away knowing that History is on the side of the critics.

Margate shows the Party as strong and confident as ever. In five days a year's cheap criticism by the Tories was confounded. The function of a Labour Party Conference is to give permanent meaning to our victory over Nazism and Fascism, but we shall not do this if we subordinate permanent principle to temporary expediency in international affairs. This is at least one of the lessons of Margate.

COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY

by ANDREW NAESMITH

(General Secretary of the Amalgamated Weavers' Association)

WORLD economic factors and the incidence of two wars have left an indelible imprint on the cotton textile industry.

Prior to 1914 the industry expanded, but the war that ended in 1919 threw up new problems, not the least of which was the growth of industrialisation that had taken place amongst the best customers. In the twenty years between 1919 and 1939 the full effects of growing nationalism, monetary exchanges, tariff policies and quotas, poverty and lack of purchasing power throughout the world, played havoc both with the organic structure of the industry and the social standards of the workpeople. The rise and development of cotton textiles in the early part of this century, their decline in the twenty years between the wars, is symptomatic of the trends in British and economic history.

The recent six years of war have intensified and magnified our problems. An industry which once made an outstanding contribution to the economic life of this nation is now unable in its present position to play any part commensurate with its past importance. Yet at the same time this nation cannot afford to let its textile industry

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degenerate into merely a producer of goods and commodities for home consumption.

There is a part for cotton textiles to play in the internal economy of the nation; but if we are to attain those higher standards of living we must boldly accept the challenge to raise the general efficiency of our industry and the productivity of labour.

At the outbreak of war there were employed within the industry approximately 370,000 workpeople. Today only about 251,000 are employed. Four major problems are therefore in urgent need of immediate solution:—

1. The shortage of labour to man existing machinery.
2. The need for larger units of production in the three sections of the industry.
3. The need for the installation and operation of modern machinery.
4. Flexibility in the employment of labour on the new machinery.

No section of the working class suffered more than the textile operatives in the disastrous period of the '30s through unemployment and under-employment. The fears and apprehensions still linger amongst adults born of the dreadful experiences which they endured. The memory of these experiences cannot be eradicated quickly, although during the war years employment has been regular and working conditions and general level of wages have improved considerably. Movements have been initiated for further improvements, and in due course these will come to fruition. The physical features of the mills will undergo great changes in consequence of improvements in humidification, air conditioning, lighting, provision of welfare facilities and the better spacing of machinery.

An investigation is now being made into the wage structures, and there is a general awareness that reforms are badly needed here to equalise wage levels as between operative and operative and mill and mill. The Piece Price List system, which has been in operation for over a hundred years, is now recognised to be totally inadequate to meet modern needs, and as between Employers' and Operatives' organisations there is a healthier co-operative spirit than ever was known in the history of the industry.

This industry has been subject to more enquiries than most others by Commissions of all kinds. Indeed, since 1913 many enquiries have been made and reports issued upon the need for the betterment and re-organisation of the industry. The report of the Working Party which was made at the instigation of the President of the Board of Trade has become a signpost showing the way along which all responsible leaders within the industry recognise they have to travel if they are to make the industry attractive to labour and serve as a national asset. We do not hope for socialisation under this Government's general policy, as it has already been decided to give the

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industry the fullest opportunity under Government guidance to rehabilitate itself.

Reforms are coming. How quickly they come depends upon the available raw material (such as coal), our engineering industry and our scientists and inventors. If we are to play our part in the craft to which we belong it is necessary that the most highly skilled and efficient textile operatives in the world are given the right machines to operate, under the right conditions. We seek no privileges in world markets, but simply ask for fair play and a fair field in which we can serve the consumers' needs.

I believe that there is a future for cotton textiles and the kindred industries that are allied to it. No one will agree to compulsory direction of labour to our industry, but we certainly expect the continued improvements in the working conditions, the right to earn a reasonable wage on an agreed basis, for these are the incentives that should be operative to attract the necessary labour voluntarily to all our mills.

THE PROBLEM OF POWER

by C. R. HOBSON, M.P.

WHY the power cuts? Ask ten people that question and nine would answer because of the shortage of coal. Lack of coal is not the reason for the shedding of industrial and domestic load, but shortage of plant. In terms of kilowatt capacity we are in Britain short of 1,700,000 kilowatts; put in simple terms equal to the output of five stations the size of Battersea, or twelve medium size power stations. A formidable task, and one which cannot with the resources available be solved under two years at least. The reasons for the shortage of generating plant are:—

1. Increased consumption. 30% over 1943, the peak war-production year. Indeed, the demand has been greater since the end of the war. In 1946 it was 41,000 million units, and in January of this year we were generating 15% above last year's maximum demand.
2. Very little new plant installed during the war in existing stations.
3. Deterioration in maintenance—6% of available plant out of commission in 1939; 15% in 1946. This startling figure is due primarily to shortage of skilled staff and the sheer inability to perform routine overhauls consequent on demands for power.

The increased consumption of electrical energy is due to heavy industrial loading consequent on full employment and heavy extra demands for domestic heating and cooking. The small coal allocation for household purposes caused many people to install electric fires, and with the installation has come the realisation that in most urban areas where the supply is publicly owned, electricity is cheaper than coal for domestic purposes. Shortage of electrical generating plant

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was foreseen. The Central Electricity Board warned the Government during the war, but top priority was never given. We just held our own; the six new stations built during the war helped to replace those put out of commission by bombing and to supply urgently needed power to growing industrial areas in the West and South-West.

Now every effort is being made to step up the construction of new plant. A special committee of the Ministry of Supply is concerned solely with equipment for power stations, and good results have already been forthcoming. It is not sufficiently realised how much work is involved in the construction of a turbo-alternator. Eighteen months is the usual period between ordering and the set being on load in normal times. Further, only six manufacturers make the large generators and only two steel founders are capable of casting the steel turbine casings. The provision in the new Electricity Bill for the British Electricity Authority to manufacture is a welcome step forward in a section of the engineering industry where monopoly has long held sway.

Satisfaction may be obtained in the knowledge that but for the Grid the electricity cuts would have been more severe. The national technical direction arising from the 1926 Act has standardised frequency, linked up all power stations, and enabled areas of the country to import and export current as need arises. An inherent weakness has been that technical staffs have had to serve two masters, the C.E.B. and the Power Company or Local Authority. This dual control is eradicated by the new Bill. Siting of power stations is an urgent problem, one which has not received sufficient impartial attention and only flares up into prominence when old historic buildings are alleged to be menaced, *vide* St. Paul's and Durham cathedrals.

Let me give figures to illustrate the argument. Coal supplied last year to power stations in the North-East area was 38s. per ton; in the London area 52s. per ton. That is equal to an increase of .1176 per unit generated, and when it is realised that many million units are generated, siting of stations becomes an important factor. I am not convinced, nor, after twenty years in the industry as a worker and fourteen years as Chairman of a Corporation Electricity Committee, have I seen figures which prove, that the loss in voltage caused by transmission and extra overhead cables is equal to or greater than the cost of transported coal from the coalfields. Cheap and abundant power is not a cliché but an economic necessity. The new British Electricity Authority must face up to this last but all-important consideration.

NOTE TO READERS

The attention of regular readers in the United Kingdom is drawn to the new (1947) terms for postal subscription, by which they can have the magazine delivered regularly by post without extra cost to themselves. Subscription form on page 3 of cover.

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THE UNITED STATES AND WORLD TRADE

by J. R. CAMPBELL

UNDER the terms of the Anglo-American Loan Agreement sterling is convertible by mid-July. Any country having a credit balance with Britain in respect of trade, or which has arrived at an agreement with regard to the repayment of part of its sterling balance, can now claim payment in dollars which it can spend in the U.S.A. instead of in the British Empire. The United States has pushed Britain into multilateral trading in advance of any European country, and therefore in advance of the development of any conditions which would make multilateralism less than disastrous for the British people.

Some of the barriers behind which the British people might find a little shelter from an American slump have been levelled to the ground at the very moment when all the prerequisites for such a slump have already developed. No one in America appears to doubt that there will be a slump this year, though there is still some discussion as to its extent. The optimists argue that it will be a comparatively short-lived "recession," leading to perhaps 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 unemployed at the worst, causing some reduction of prices at home and abroad, which will soon lead to a more balanced economy and a further upsurge in employment. But the number of observers who predict a more prolonged and dangerous crisis is growing. They argue that the idea that there will only be a short recession is based on the assumption that the main cause of America's difficulties is that prices have run ahead of wages and salaries, that people are progressively less able to continue buying the same amount of goods at present prices, that stocks of unsold goods are accumulating and that therefore there will be a short recession during which prices are forced down to a more reasonable level. But as Sir Arthur Salter pointed out in *The Times,* the supply of dollars in the hands of countries outside the U.S.A. is sharply diminishing, and if this supply reaches a low point just when the "recession" is beginning it may turn the short recession into a very long and intractable economic crisis.

Seen in their true proportion, the economic difficulties which have emerged from this war are infinitely greater and more baffling from a capitalist standpoint than those which emerged from World War One. Today America has two-thirds of the world's manufacturing capacity and about three-quarters of its investment capacity outside the Soviet Union. Within that greatly increased manufacturing capacity there has been a truly enormous development of the capital goods and durable consumer goods (motors, vacuum cleaners,

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refrigerators, etc.), whose products could not possibly be absorbed by the American internal market plus its average pre-war overseas markets. If America is to maintain a high level of employment on the basis of its present balance of industries, it will need a truly gigantic volume of exports. (The alternative of cutting back the capital goods industries, changing the distribution of wealth between the classes, developing the backward areas of the U.S.A., thereby creating a greater internal consumers' market and an enlarged scope for consumer industries and services, would involve a drastic reduction of profits in the capital goods sector and is not very practicable on a capitalist basis). How then is the U.S.A. to maintain this huge volume of exports to an outside world ruined and devastated by the war?

In the Roosevelt period the faint outlines of this problem were seen and a policy was elaborated which presupposed that the United States would make extraordinary efforts to help the rest of the world to its feet, because there could not be a prosperous U.S.A. in a poverty-stricken world. So a policy of large-scale international assistance was projected. U.N.R.R.A. was to help liberated countries until they got their own agriculture and industry going; the International Monetary Fund was to supply them with short-term credits which would ease their balance of payment difficulties; the International Bank would give them loans for long-term reconstruction; and finally an International Trade Organisation would break down tariff barriers and free the channels of world trade. This policy would only have been feasible if a number of conditions were present. These were:

(a) That after a brief period of transition, all economies could be restored to fair economic health.

(b) That all were more or less at the same stage of economic development.

(c) That the states playing a predominant role in international trade (above all the U.S.A.) were prepared to adopt national and international full-employment policies.

(d) That the International Trade Organisation would develop rules for mutual trade between countries with differing social systems.

If, however, the United States rushed to scrap all internal controls, it was clear that no full employment proposals could be implemented, that there could be no guarantee that it would balance its exports by increasing the amount of its imports or by foreign loans, and that therefore the only effect of freer trade would be to spread American booms and slumps throughout the world.

That in fact is what has happened. Already the United States boom has terribly damaged its war-devastated neighbours. By lifting price control it automatically reduced the value of their loans. Although some of these loans were advanced for re-equipment,

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foreign buyers were elbowed out of the queue by U.S. business men claiming preference in re-equipment. The value of foreign loans to their recipients shrank very considerably.

Under Truman American economic assistance began to be conceived not as a means of promoting economic recovery amongst countries of diverse social systems, but of promoting the restoration of capitalism everywhere. Nowhere was this more clear than with regard to U.N.R.R.A. Because of the poor harvests of 1945 and 1946 the U.N.R.R.A. authorities requested a continuance of relief until the 1947 harvest was gathered. But because it disliked the politics of the devastated allied countries which were receiving relief, the U.S. administration, with the British Government in shameful support, wound up U.N.R.R.A. This ought to be remembered at a moment when the U.S.A. is receiving fulsome praise for its offer of relief to Europe. It followed this up by presenting to the world a draft trade Charter which would rob undeveloped countries of power to develop their economies, which would impose the greatest hardships on countries which had been economically undermined by the war, and which proposed the most outrageous discrimination against countries with a state monopoly of foreign trade.

The draft Trade Charter actually proposed that a country which had a complete monopoly of foreign trade should undertake to import over a given period a specified amount of the products of other countries. The argument appears to be that if a country with a state monopoly imported, say, £100,000,000 of goods one year, £25,000,000 the next and £150,000,000 the next, it would be creating trade instability amongst the countries who normally traded with it. So it should be asked to import a minimum quantity over a period and endeavour to prevent wild up and down fluctuations in its imports. That looks fair enough until we ask the question, " Why should this proposition not apply to all countries?" After all a capitalist economy whose imports fluctuate wildly (like the U.S. economy between the wars) is also creating great trade instability.

The draft Charter also came out strongly against discrimination, or rather the U.S. interpretation thereof. It forbade countries like Britain to use their position as large importers to force other countries to take a certain proportion of British exports in exchange for the goods which Britain bought from them. It did not forbid the U.S., when it made a loan to another country, to force that country to buy only U.S. goods.

Naturally this outrageous document came in for a good deal of criticism at the London economic conference at the end of last year. The Australians insisted that it should stress the importance of every country maintaining full employment and that the Charter should permit countries to discriminate against the imports of any country that was disorganising world trade by failing to maintain full employment. The Czechs and the Indians won concessions for countries

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carrying out a policy of industrialisation. Alas, poor old Britain and its special problems were never apparently dealt with at all.

This was the background to the opening of the International Economic Conference at Geneva, a Conference that was expected to agree to the lowering of tariffs and preferences and to finalise the Charter for submission to a conference in the Autumn. Since it opened, two events have taken place which expose once and for all the American cant about non-discrimination.

Australia is the most consistent critic of American trade policy, although it relied on that country as a great market for its wool. The U.S. has a native wool industry whose materials are poorer and whose costs are much higher than those of Australia. It is not a vital industry in the U.S. economy, and its restriction would not harm anyone but a few producers. There was a clear case here for a lowering of the U.S. tariff, so that the U.S. textile industry could buy wool on the most advantageous terms. There is, however, a powerful wool lobby which actually persuaded U.S. Congress to increase its tariff on Australian wool at the very moment when the U.S. representatives in Geneva were negotiating on its reduction. The question naturally arises: is the U.S. claiming the right to reduce other people's tariffs and preferences while claiming the right to increase its own? Is the world to be again plunged into a disastrous crisis by a great flood of U.S. exports for which the U.S. refuses to accept payment by admitting more imports?

But wool was only the curtain raiser at Geneva. This was followed by the development of the economic implications of the Truman doctrine in the speeches of Acheson and Marshall. These speeches made it clear to the world that while the U.S. administration will fight against anyone discriminating against America, it proposes to discriminate against whomsoever it pleases. Seldom has a government behaved with such unconcealed effrontery. For months it has been declaring that countries must only trade with each other on commercial market principles, and that for Britain to give its dominions preferences is political discrimination which must be abandoned in the interests of freer world trade. It protested against the Russian-Swedish trade agreement for the same reason.

Along comes Mr. Acheson, late Assistant Secretary of State, and announces a world-wide policy of economic discrimination. He suggests that loans should be given by the U.S. on the basis of the sharpest possible political discrimination. "Free peoples who are seeking to preserve their independence and democratic institutions against totalitarian pressures, *either external or internal,* will receive top priority for American reconstruction aid," he announced. Note the phrase "internal pressures"—a euphemism for the advance of the working class to political power in any European country.

Further, Mr. Acheson announced that the U.S. would push ahead

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with the "reconstruction of those two great workshops of Europe and Asia—Germany and Japan—upon which the ultimate recovery of both continents so largely depends." This was followed by Mr. Marshall announcing the same policy in different words. Of course, some political nitwits have noted that Mr. Marshall would be prepared to extend assistance to all countries in Europe including Russia. But on what terms? The terms acceptable to the rulers of a capitalist Belgium could easily be made impossible of acceptance by any state with a planned economy. Mr. Marshall could then plead that he was not discriminating—was he not offering assistance to all on the same capitalist terms?

Let it be clear that the Marshall policy buries the Roosevelt policy of world reconstruction. There was always of course a strong infusion of American self-interest in Roosevelt's policy, but it did envisage forms of economic agreement between the socialist and the capitalist worlds. The Marshall policy is a declaration of economic war against the socialist world, against all countries advancing to socialism, against the progress of the workers' movement everywhere. Yet there are people in the British Labour movement who will pretend that it is a great policy of benevolence and not a policy of international counter-revolution, pursued by the same forces that are now so fiercely attacking American trade unionism. This is a policy aimed at stopping the advance of the workers' movement everywhere. It cannot succeed, however, on the basis of U.S. strength. It needs above all the co-operation of the British Government. This co-operation must not be given. On the contrary the British Government must oppose the policy of U.S. domination with a policy of world co-operation.

Firstly, in view of the almost universal recognition of the imminence of a U.S. slump the British Government should call for an emergency meeting of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations to consider preventive action. The U.S. cannot logically object. It is pledged by its membership of the United Nations to take international action to maintain full employment. Let it now translate its professions into practice.

Secondly, the British Government ought to tell the U.S.A. that before it makes vague promises of more U.S. loans it ought to allow all countries to conserve the loans which they have already received. The convertibility of sterling should be postponed and the right of Britain to cut U.S. imports which it cannot really afford should be given without Britain having to make similar cuts from non-dollar countries.

Thirdly, Britain must go ahead with its trade agreements with all European countries, but particularly with Eastern Europe from which the first instalments of wheat and timber may soon be expected. It must cease under-writing American counter-revolution in Hungary.

Fourthly, it must fight for a revision of the trade charter so that

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all discrimination against planned economies shall be eliminated. No doubt a planned economy could reasonably be called upon to tell the world what minimum amount of goods it proposes to buy for a period ahead. But so must the United States, for it has been the great fluctuation in its purchases in the past that has been the cause of world-wide instability.

Fifthly, if Britain wants to discuss the economic future of Europe as a whole, it must not engage in "under-the-counter" discussions with France or any other state. Let it call for a plenary meeting of the European Commission of the United Nations and start the discussion there.

Last, but not least, let it call the Dominions and India together to discuss mutual trade relations. If the State of New York can give special trade preferences to the State of Texas as compared with the rest of the world, Britain is entitled to have special trade relations with New Zealand or India as compared with the rest of the world.

In short, if the United States will return to the policy of Roosevelt and work out a policy for world economic co-operation, Britain will be ready to participate, but it must not co-operate in a counter-revolutionary policy aimed at destroying the working-class advance to socialism.

THE MOUNTBATTEN PLAN FOR INDIA

by R. PALME DUTT

THE Mountbatten Plan proposes the partition of India and the speedy transfer of responsibility, initially in the form of Dominion Status, to Indian Governments for the sections of a divided India.

Formally, the Plan does not lay down the partition of India, but provides machinery for the areas affected by the Pakistan demand to choose, either through their Legislative Assembly representatives or through referendum, between a single Constituent Assembly in accordance with the Cabinet Mission Plan, or a separate Constituent Assembly for a separate State. This involves division of the Punjab and Bengal so that the Moslem-majority areas and non-Moslem majority areas can decide separately. In practice, on the basis of existing representation, this means partition, including almost certainly the partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

The position of the Princes' States is left unchanged: that is, with the ending of paramountcy they can join either grouping or proclaim their independence and establish their separate relations with Britain.

Legislation is to be hurried through Parliament to establish the new Dominion Government or Governments.

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If the Plan goes through, the result will establish the following States or State areas in India:

(1) North West Pakistan, covering Western Punjab, Sind, and possibly the North West Frontier and Baluchistan, with a population of 25 millions (18 million Moslems);

(2) North East Pakistan, covering Eastern Bengal and the Sylhet district of Assam, with a population of 44 millions (31 million Moslems).
These two areas, divided by a thousand miles, would constitute the Pakistan State or Federation, with a population of 70 millions.

(3) The Indian Union or Hindustan, covering the rest of British India, with a population of 225 millions.

(4) The Princes' States, covering two-fifths of the area of India with a population of 93 millions or one quarter, would join one or other federation, or possibly, in the case of one or two larger States, such as Hyderabad and Travancore, according to their present declared intentions, proclaim their separate independence.

Assuming that the Princes' States all finally decide to link up with one or other grouping, then on a very rough estimate Pakistan would represent about one quarter of India, covering mainly agricultural, feudal and industrially undeveloped, but strategically important territory; and the Indian Union would represent about three-quarters of India, including the main industrial and commercial regions and urban centres, and the most politically advanced and democratically developed sections of the population and the main forces of the working class.

Relations of Britain with the States to be formed would finally be determined by special treaties. Military, administrative and economic questions are left for future settlement.

* * *

This Plan, the third within twelve months (Cabinet Mission Plan of June, 1946; Attlee Declaration of February, 1947; Mountbatten Plan of June, 1947), has received the assent of the leadership of the major political organisations in India and in Britain.

In India the main political leaders have declared their acceptance of the proposals, though with heavy misgivings.

Nehru on behalf of the Congress declared:

"It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals."

Jinnah on behalf of the Moslem League declared:

"We cannot say or feel that we are satisfied or that we agree with some of the matters dealt with by the plan."

Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs declared:

"It would be untrue if I were to say that we are altogether happy. The British Plan does not please everybody, not the Sikh community anyway."

On the other hand, J. P. Narain on behalf of the Indian Socialists, and P. C. Joshi on behalf of the Indian Communists, have sharply criticised the Plan as involving the dismemberment of India, and as not representing a real transfer of power, and have opposed acceptance. P. C. Joshi has declared:

"The new British Plan for the dismemberment of India is a desperate

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move against the freedom movement which stands for the complete independence of the whole of the country . . .

"Mountbatten's Plan is not a genuine 'Quit India' plan, but rather one which seeks to keep in British hands as many economic and military controls as possible."

In Britain Tory-Labour unity has been proclaimed in support of the Plan. Churchill, in contrast to his opposition to previous proposals, has declared his approval of the general lines of the Mountbatten Plan, and congratulated Attlee on his selection of Mountbatten as Viceroy—praise which, according to *The Times*, "brought a flush of pleasure to the Prime Minister's cheek." "The two men," observed the "Manchester Guardian" of Churchill and Attlee, "have not found so much common ground since this Parliament began." On the occasion of the Parliamentary announcement only Gallacher expressed criticism. In the City Indian share prices immediately rose, following the announcement, and as the "Daily Herald" noted, "the City gave its blessing to the Plan."

Internationally the Plan has received high praise in the American official Press, and in the Right Wing Press of most countries. On the other hand, Reuters has noted that "Left-wing newspapers have been unfavourable in all countries." Soviet comment was provided by the statement of Zhukov:

"Britain is being forced to take a page from America's book and copy her policy in the Philippines—to give a nominal false freedom. In other words, to clear out so as to remain."

A commentary by Lemin on the Moscow Radio drew the conclusion:

"From declarations proclaiming the transfer of power to the Indians it is a far cry to true independence for India. The achievement of the latter will depend first and foremost on the strength of the national liberation movement. British ruling circles mean to maintain their economic, political and military positions in India, whatever her future constitutional structure may be. Among other things they bank on the economic ties established between the British and the Indian bourgeoisie . . .

"Irrespective of the constitutional changes in India, what really matters is the actual economic, political and military positions that British capital succeeds in maintaining in that country. This will decide whether the long-standing question of independence for India will be settled as it was in the Philippines, or whether India will become a really independent democratic country."

* * *

The rapid and accelerating succession of new Plans for India (and the Mountbatten Plan is by no means likely to prove the final solution, when it comes to the practical problems of operating it) are a demonstration of the deepening crisis in India. Imperialism can no longer govern India in the old way. The Indian people are determined to win their independence. The old administrative machine has collapsed. British power, in its present weakened world position, can no longer hope by military coercion to hold India

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in submission. As Cripps said in the House of Commons debate on March 5:

"There were fundamentally two alternatives facing the Government. First, they could endeavour to strengthen British control in India on the basis of a considerable reinforcement of British troops . . . The second alternative was to accept the fact that the first alternative was not possible . . . One thing that was quite obviously impossible was to decide to continue our responsibility indefinitely and indeed against our own wishes into a period when we had not the power to carry it out."

This bankruptcy of the old imperialist order and irresistible upsurge of the Indian people is the central dominating fact of the Indian situation since the war. All the elaborate constitutional manœuvres, on the one hand, and the hideous provoked disorders and internal division rending the Indian people, on the other, are only the symptoms of the deep social and political change which is preparing—the blood-soaked birth-pangs of Indian freedom. This crisis has mounted over the past two years. Even the desperate attempts to divert the popular upsurge into fratricidal channels of communal strife have only deepened the crisis, weakened and demoralised the administrative apparatus, undermined the stability of the armed forces, spread contempt for law and order, and hastened the menace of a general conflagration. Gigantic problems are looming before the Indian people, including the deepening food crisis, which are beyond the capacity of the existing administrative apparatus to solve.

Hence the accelerating urgency of British policy to reach a settlement before the situation has passed entirely out of control. The Cabinet Mission Plan, itself the product of the naval revolt, fixed no date for the transfer of power. The Attlee Declaration fixed the date of June, 1948. The Mountbatten Plan seeks to anticipate the Attlee date and complete the process of handing over to Dominion Governments by August or September of this year.

But this enforced retreat of imperialism is accompanied by complex manœuvres to play on every element of reaction and division (Princes, Hindu-Moslem antagonism, Congress-League disagreement, etc.) in such a way as to qualify in practice the formal transfer of power and protect the essential political, economic and strategic interests of British capital in India.

In place of a straightforward recognition of independence and transfer of power to the majority political leadership of Indian Nationalism, leaving the internal problems of India to be settled by Indian leaders, each successive complicated Plan has revealed this essential character of building an elaborate structure to play on Indian divisions and antagonisms.

Before the Cabinet Mission arrived, the mighty national upsurge in India was unsullied by communal conflict. The great mass demonstrations bore united Congress and League flags and the slogans "Hindus and Moslems, Unite!" "Down with British imperialism!"

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But the Cabinet Mission Plan erected its entire structure on separating Hindus and Moslems in statutory fixed compartments of its so-called "constituent assembly" and counterposing Congress and League in an uneasy balance of mutual impotence and antagonism. The resultant accentuated conflict spread the hell of communal violence through many areas of India. The Attlee Declaration of February 20 prepared the way for partition by declaring that, in the event of the Moslem League continuing its obstruction, such obstruction would be rewarded by granting its demand for partition. The Mountbatten Award has completed the process and laid down the lines of partition.

As in Ireland, so in India, when the national revolt can no longer be contained, an evil legacy of partition is left by the departing imperialist Power to poison the life of the revolting nation and leave behind two weak and mutually conflicting administrations in place of a strong united and progressive nation.

The conditions, however, are not the same in India as in Ireland for the success of this manœuvre.

* * *

The central new feature of the Mountbatten Plan is the partition of India. The main boast of British rule in India was its unification of India. At the end of two centuries of British rule the India which was united under Asoka and Chandragupta over two thousand years ago and under Akbar three and a half centuries ago is handed back, split into discordant fragments, and needing to tread a toilsome and painful path to overcome this vicious legacy of imperialist "divide and rule" and forge living unity anew.

Partition is so universally recognised in all responsible quarters as disastrous for Indian progressive development that the attempt is made on either side to throw the responsibility on other shoulders. British Government spokesmen claim that they would have preferred the semi-unity of the Cabinet Mission Plan, but that, in the absence of united acceptance by both Congress and the League, partition has become unfortunately inevitable. Congress claims that the refusal of Britain to hand over in democratic fashion to the elected majority leadership of the Indian people, and its insistence on placing a power of absolute veto in the hands of the obstructive minority, made inevitable the British-imposed award of partition which Congress accepts only under protest.

In any case partition is a great evil for India. It represents no lasting solution, but contains the seeds of future conflicts. The delimitation of frontiers holds the possibilities of endless discords. The Moslem League has only accepted a "truncated" Pakistan in order to continue the fight for the extension of its frontiers. Congress stands by the aim of the united sovereign democratic Republic of India.

Partition hinders progressive development, encourages

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particularism, reaction and communal antagonism, places a barrier in the way of urgently needed all-India economic and social planning, and provides a fertile ground for the disruptive intrigues of rival imperialist powers to gain a foothold in India.

Marxist students of the Indian problem have recognised that within the sub-continent of India there are various national groups with their own languages and cultural traditions; and they have urged that only through self-determination of these nationalities in democratic fashion a real and lasting unity of the Indian people will be achieved. Such a solution of the multinational problem has already been powerfully demonstrated, not only in the case of the U.S.S.R., but more recently in the experience of the Jugoslavian People's Federal Republic. Such a union will undoubtedly prove the final solution also in India as the necessary economic and political development of Indian history.

But the present proposed partition of the Mountbatten Plan, based upon Hindu and Moslem States, not to speak of the equally arbitrary boundaries of the Princes' States, has nothing in common with national self-determination. It creates economic monstrosities; it divorces agricultural hinterland from industrial areas; it cuts indiscriminately across railway and irrigation systems; it must necessarily produce chaos in the economic life of India, and give rise to endless complications in the settlement of common services, communications and financial relations; it ruthlessly divides brother from brother on different sides of artificially drawn barriers; and with the proposal to sub-divide Bengal and the Punjab it opens up a way for the limitless fragmentation of India.

If this partition is carried through, every effort will need to be made to overcome its disastrous consequences, to build up the closest relations and co-operation of the two Governments, and to prepare the way for the speediest future unification.

* * *

Congress has only accepted the present partition plan as a make-shift in order to win effective control over the maximum possible area of India, with the unchanged objective to lead forward to the united democratic Republic of India. This was made clear by Nehru in his speech to the States Peoples' Conference at Gwalior on April 18:

"Our aim at present is to liberate as much of India as we can—one half or three-fourths—and then to deal with the question of independence for the rest."

The establishment of a Dominion Government or Governments, even though restricted in effectiveness by the evil consequences of partition, will represent a signal advance on the present status of the Interim Government. Already through the Interim Government a valuable achievement has been possible in the sphere of foreign policy; and Indian spokesmen in the United Nations have

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played an independent and progressive role, in marked contrast to the former puppets who provided British reaction with an extra vote in the supposed name of India. But in internal affairs the Interim Government has been in practice impotent, both through its lack of recognised constitutional authority (the formal position of its members still being that of nominated advisors of the Viceroy), the lack of recognition of the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility, and the mutual feud of the counterpoised Congress and League members, leaving the Viceroy and the bureaucracy in effective control.

The replacement of this situation by responsible Cabinets based on elected popular majorities (even though for the moment on a restricted franchise and communal electorates) will open the way to far-reaching democratic advance and planned economic and social development for the urgent tasks of national reconstruction.

The fulfilment of these tasks will require the closest co-operation of all progressive sections of the national movement and the working-class movement on a common democratic platform.

The working-class movement, which has alone throughout maintained its ranks untouched by communal divisions and has led the fight against communal disruption and disorders, has special problems and responsibility in face of the prospect of the temporary partition of India. The magnificent unity achieved through the All-India Trade Union Congress and the All-India Peasant Federation must not be broken. Here it may be suggested to the national leadership that the attempt to form rival unions, whether through a Congress-controlled "National Trade Union Congress," or through Moslem unions, is not only contrary to the interests of the working class and will break on the rock of working class solidarity, but is also contrary to the interests of national unity for the victory of independence. Now more than ever the situation reveals the urgent need, increasingly recognised on both sides, to endeavour to overcome the past phase of sharp divisions between the Congress and the Communist Party in order to march forward together upon a common programme of democratic advance, for the achievement of full independence and eventual all-India democratic union, and for the fulfilment of the economic and social demands, land reform, measures of nationalisation and planned industrial development, for which the workers and peasants and masses of the Indian people are looking.

* * *

In order to ensure that the transfer of power shall be made effective, it is essential to ensure that the accompanying concrete conditions, especially in the military sphere, in relation to the Princes' States, and in the economic sphere, shall not invalidate this transfer or permit of indirect forms of continued imperialist control.

In the military sphere the full withdrawal of British forces and military missions and the handing over of all bases and installations

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to Indian control are an essential condition of real independence. No clear statement of the Government's policy has yet been made in this respect; and many long-term military preparations, especially in the States, have been widely reported. Bevin in his speech at the Labour Party Conference, referring to British troops in India, stated that "independence will affect the number of our troops there"—which would appear to imply that it would not necessarily mean their withdrawal. Alexander's reply to Piratin in the House of Commons debate on March 6 would also appear to imply continued military occupation in India:

PIRATIN: I would like to have an unequivocal statement from the Government that there will be no troops stationed in India whether invited or uninvited.

ALEXANDER: It is a most extraordinary proposition—I know the Hon. Member is keenly interested in the Russian ideology and so on—if it is to be suggested that the British authority is never to respond in any circumstances sympathetically to the request of another power, while Russia may be quite free to respond to any other countries that desire Russian troops there.

Alexander's explosion indicates that a vulnerable point had here been touched; and the attempted analogy reveals that the Government considers it as legitimate to maintain British troops in India after the formal recognition of independence or dominion status as for the Soviet Union to maintain troops in ex-enemy occupied countries in accordance with the peace settlement. It may be noted that not only have various Princes of major States offered their territories, but also some Moslem League leaders have offered Pakistan as a suitable British military base in India.

In relation to the Princes' States the position is still unsettled. Constitutionally, with the lapsing of paramountcy, the States resume their independence and need only enter into such voluntary relations as they choose with the Indian Union or Pakistan. Hyderabad and Travancore have asserted their intention to stand on their own and make their separate relations with Britain. Mountbatten has declared that "the British Government has no intention of recognising any Indian State as a separate Dominion," but that he would transmit any request from a State for a separate treaty to the British Government. There are indications that British policy would urge the States to align themselves with one or other of the two Dominions to be formed, no doubt as performing a more useful function as a conservative factor within the new Dominions rather than as standing outside; but that this would not necessarily affect their autonomy or exclude the presence of special British missions, officers and "advisors." The Indian people will finally deal with the Princes and States, whose autocracies have only maintained a puppet existence as pawns of British power, and will not be able ultimately to resist the advance of Indian democracy and freedom. But in the critical transition period we must defeat the attempts to make the Princes' States or certain major States continue bases of imperialist control

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and influence. Resolute opposition will be necessary to the contracting of special treaties or the establishing of special direct relations with the Indian Princes against the interests of the unity and independence of India as a whole.

In the economic sphere special attention will need to be paid to defeat any attempts to impose unequal economic agreements upon India or to interfere in the free development of her economy. It is known that the big British monopolies calculate to maintain and extend their grip on India even within the new forms through association with the Indian monopolies as junior partners in the Indo-British corporations which are being organised in the present period. The I.C.I. Information Bulletin, in a special confidential report on the "Political Outlook" in India, concludes:

There is every reason now to believe that the discrimination against foreign businesses which was once feared will not materialise. . .

Unless a Communist uprising on the Russian model could be organised, nationalisation of industries will not go much further than the Government setting up factories at State expense in all those cases where the ordinary chances of supply and demand do not forecast a probable profit on an adequate scale. . .

On the whole, business interests with substantial resources are justified in not taking too short a view and in being cautiously optimistic.

Any serious programme of national reconstruction in India will inevitably require large-scale nationalisation of the main industries and larger enterprises and elimination of foreign monopolies. In the coming critical negotiations on the sterling balances it is essential to repudiate the harsh Dalton attitude, which not only ignores the heavy burdens placed on the Indian masses by the war, but also in practice plays straight into the hands of the American financial interests to clear the road for dollar penetration of India (Dalton's speech was immediately applauded by Churchill and the U.S. Treasury), while alienating Indian feeling and losing the opportunity of a mutually beneficial economic settlement with India.

* * *

The international aspects of the new situation developing in India are of far-reaching importance.

Already, even within the limitations of the conditions of the Interim Government, Indian representatives in the United Nations, under the guidance of Nehru as Foreign Minister, have been able to take a courageous and progressive stand, independently of British reaction, over the issues of South Africa and Palestine. The combined leadership of the Soviet Union, India and the progressive democratic countries has even been able on occasion to rally a majority against the bloc of reaction represented by the United States, Britain, South Africa, etc. Indian initiative in convening the Delhi Conference of Asiatic nations, including representatives of the Soviet Asian Republics, constituted a landmark in the closer relations of the

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peoples of Asia marching forward along the path of liberation. The world is looking to Indian representatives abroad to carry forward this progressive role, so that India will fulfil the great part which it can play in the partnership of democratic nations.

American imperialism has its eye on India and is actively striving to press forward its penetration. This has been shown in the appointment of O'Grady, former head of the wartime Technical Mission which prepared the confidential report on Indian resources, as Ambassador, with the special message from Truman on American readiness to participate in Indian economic development; the extension of American consulates; the U.S.-Nepal Agreement of May; and the visit of the U.S. warship Toledo to Bombay on May 19. In the past many sections of the Indian national movement tended to look to America as a progressive anti-imperialist country whose assistance might be a positive factor in opposition to British imperialism. That situation has changed. The Indian national movement has not fought to throw off the yoke of British imperialism only in order to fall a victim to the now more powerful and dangerous American imperialism. The examples of Greece, Turkey and China have awakened Indian opinion to the menace of American expansion and dollar penetration; and the hostile reception to the Toledo at Bombay has revealed this awakening.

In this situation the close co-operation of the British and Indian peoples on a democratic and equal basis is more than ever important, both politically and economically. Once the last traces of the relations of imperialist domination are removed, we can look forward to the closest friendly relations and co-operation, both economic and political, of mutual benefit for both peoples within the world partnership of democratic nations.

FROM AN ENGINEERING SHOP

by REG. BIRCH

DURING the war years factory life was eventful—not because of the raids! They finally came to be regarded as a nuisance; it was an irritation to have to drop the job because of the danger signal. "Getting the job out" or "playing our part" were not just phrases. "Oh! to hell with the signal: I can't go to the shelter while I'm in the middle of this" was heard, and not out of bravado. The job of defeating the fascists, at least our part as engineers, became for us the central thought of every day. Phrases such as "We musn't let the boys down" or "For good old Joe" became part of the everyday vocabulary of workers, some of whom before the war might have discussed only "dogs" or "the Arsenal."

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This, despite our long-standing Trade Union outlook of opposition to the employer. Oh yes, we were aware (and cynically amused by it) that our working harder meant bigger profits for the governor. We gave up many hard-won privileges; we supported the introduction of dilutees, and taught our skill and all the tricks of the trade gained by many years of experience to the newcomer, the greenhorn. The urgency of war brought this about—yes, and also the fact that the strategy and tactics of war were applied to industry, not only from on high but, more importantly, on the shop floor, by shop leaders. First of all we had the necessary target "winning the war," expressed in more ways than one, from "Defeating Fascism" to "Giving Jerry a bashing." One could not enter a shop without the knowledge of the link between the product and its use in war. On the walls were propaganda posters, charts of progress, etc., from the Ministries and from the workers' own wall newspapers. The production drive, with its displays of, perhaps, the shells we were making and the gun that was to fire them, the visits to factories of Forces personnel fresh from the battle areas—this was the kind of link that held together our engineers in all factories, united in the one task.

The J.P.Cs. were active and busy. By their close watch on output many inefficiencies were quickly brought to light and remedied. Through them workers put forward ideas to increase output. Yes, we were made to feel part, and an important part, of the whole "managerial functions." They were no longer sacrosanct and were assailed on every side by circumstances.

But today we enter the factory with none of these elements. Gone is the added interest, the extra sense of importance and responsibility. The adventure has gone again. It is with regret that we shut out the sun as we clock in. We reconcile ourselves to a dreary day; and though it is a shorter one Monday to Friday can be a long week. Inside we see a few dull posters only, on National Savings, to remind us of the peace. And yet the Battle of Peace is on and the target for all workers is still clear, a better life. Why then is there not the same drive, the same sense of urgency?

First, I think there is a failure to express this from outside, a reluctance to talk of a rising standard of life, save in the dim and distant future. In this most constructive of jobs there is only a negative form of publicity from the Government. The approach "Work or Want—Export or Die" is calculated, if unchecked, to sow seeds of apathy and pessimism.

Then, in this period of acute manpower shortage, redundancy can and does arise. We have so-called "pockets of unemployment," and pretty large pockets at that. In the face of these factors workers may ask whether harder work on their part isn't going to mean doing someone else out of a job.

Within the factory there is a rapid return, or attempted return, to the old order, though with a subtle difference. Attempts are being

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made to utilise the knowledge gained by employers of workers' speed; to regularise an effort that was made in wartime when the sky was the limit and blood and sweat literally were expended; and to attack piece-work prices. The term " managerial function " is again bandied about; shop stewards are a nuisance, and even when accepted by the employer as necessary are treated as a necessary evil to be tolerated only. And, indeed, victimisation of shop stewards is on the increase.

The J.P.Cs. are in danger of dying out from inertia, in this most vital period. It is a rare sight now, though one that was common during the war, to see workers, employers and Government officials sitting round the same table thrashing out ways of overcoming difficulties and getting out the job. There is sound commonsense in the demand for more workers' control. But workers are not so much as informed of " planning discussions " between the Government, employers and T.U.C. We have to listen to those who never worked at bench or machine, to be told by Cripps " Workers are not yet ready to manage," and at the same time exhorted to work harder!

Since the crisis, sub-contract work deliveries are greatly delayed, material supply delivery is still more erratic, and jobs are held up. There is now almost a famine in certain materials such as stainless steel and the most commonly used in engineering work, mild steel. One can wait as long as twelve months for a delivery of the latter.

What is one to say to a worker whose job, perhaps because of these shortages or perhaps because of lack of planning, is lying idle? Or to one who says " Why should I work harder? I rushed over this one because I was told it was urgent and now it's just chucked in a corner and left there " ?

To the average chap in the shop the reasons for the muddle are obvious and the remedy seems to be elementary. The White Paper does not give the answers: it merely poses the problem. The answers can be listed, viz:—

A National Plan.
The use of manpower.
Controls.

A National Plan would ensure that among the various Ministries would be planned control of which industries should come first, e.g. mining and textile machinery and power equipment, so that there would be a drive on the production of these. Export of such machinery necessary to the rehabilitation of our industry would cease. Standardisation of their manufacture would speed up production.

Such a Ministry could progress the work from firm to firm and would have the closest liaison with the E.A.C. nationally and with regional bodies. It could insist on standardisation of methods to economise on labour and materials. It could pass on information of new methods and centralise experimental work in design. In this way the majority of factories could go ahead with the job of production without being constantly held up because of delay, waiting on

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components because a design has to be scrapped. Research work on design, materials and methods could be extended and essential testing equipment made available to all factories.

Manpower under such a plan would be treated as the short-supply, precious commodity it is. First the priority industries would be properly staffed. Control would ensure that there would be no misuse of labour on unessential or black market work. There would be a check on all manufacturers in the engineering industry. No further "lines," whether they be fancy brooches or new kinds of electric irons, would be started unless they served some basic need in industry. The small shops, catching quick profits by means of trinket manufacture and such semi-black market stuff, should be put on the making of essentials. Even in factories engaged on priorities, care would be taken to ensure that labour was not diverted from work of national importance to work serving the long-term ends of private enterprise. The balance between produce and non-produce in a factory would also be kept. It is a joke among workers in one factory in London that there are four to five people who stand behind the man at the bench or machine to tell him how to do it.

Controls. Such a National Plan can only be successful on the basis of control of the purchase of raw material, by direction as to where it may go and what priority. There must be price control of manufacture and a direct ploughing back of profits. Here again, can there be the spectacle of an industry earning high profits for years becoming derelict because of lack of money spent on capital equipment and modernisation, such as the mining industry? The extension of bulk purchase of materials by the Government would assist in the saving of raw materials.

Finally, power supply must be controlled on a priority basis. The provision of cheap rates for night power might encourage many employers to extend or begin night shifts.

So much for planning. Nobody pretends that the job is really simple or that it can be marked off and worked as from a blue-print without a single snag arising. The one real snag, however, the greatest obstacle, is lack of conviction on the Government's part, displayed by the many negative aspects of Government policy. The negative approach of the Government on wages, on equal pay, on strikes, must cease. The claptrap of inflation, Dalton's stupid remark "Equal pay would lead directly to inflation," must be retracted. The fact remains that wages are desperately trying to get level with constantly rising prices—rent, food, fares, beer, tobacco, entertainment.

We resent the use of troops in so-called "unofficial strikes." The T.U.C. must realise they have no right to be involved with the Government in discussions on unofficial strikes while they take shelter behind 1305. All strikes will be unofficial while this Order remains —and how glad some T.U. officials are of this fact! We resent also the discussions made in our name and without our agreement on

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"displaced persons," and we reject the philosophy that if a job is so badly paid that no British worker will work at it, then the only alternative is foreign labour. While industries and jobs remain unattractive, the function of the T.U.C. is clear. They must fight for improved conditions in these industries while calling for active support from their members in making these demands. The "brass tacks" of the T.U.C. pamphlet are no good. These are the real brass tacks.

We can improve output, we can have greater efficiency, we will be able to work harder, providing we get the assistance. Priorities must be established—and don't make them a state secret! Let us, the workers, know about them. Let us help to fix them.

Through the E.A.C. and Regional Boards, targets of production must be set, and from them to the factories. A spirit of competition in endeavour must be aroused. It should not be a question of banning mid-week sport for the workers but of awarding to sections of industry and to individual factories a half-day off with pay for beating a target production. Let us organise a real sporting event in the factories and during the week—the competition to produce more.

The job can be done. Only imagination and courage are required. A start has already been made in many factories, where valiant attempts by live stewards and active T.U. members to arouse interest and break down the torpor and defeat pessimism are being made. In the glorious example of the miners and miners' leaders the way is being shown. Let some of the Government representatives, and, for that matter, many T.U. leaders, overcome their shyness and come out to meet the workers at the point of production. They must be prepared for a cool reception at first. The type of propaganda "the portly gent with Union Jack waistcoat telling us Work or Want" is no good. We want a positive approach. Work to a target, an increase in the standard of living of all workers, with incentives, will bring back the spirit that helped defeat the Nazis. Let us be positive for a change, instead of negative.

Book Review

Class Struggles in Ancient Greece by Margaret O. Wason (Gollancz, 12*s* 6*d*, 262 pp.).

The author writes in the preface:

"Ancient history has always had a number of problems which have vexed ancient historians and evaded solution for centuries. A Marxist interpretation provides a new approach. The material takes a different shape, the pieces fall into position, and the problem is convincingly solved."

This claim arouses some apprehension, not because it is untrue, but because the application of Marxism is a difficult task, in which any shortcomings will be used by our opponents to discredit Marxism as a method. The problems which she claims to have dealt with in this way are the analysis of the Bronze Age; the role of the tyrants; the causes of Roman intervention in Greece; and "the whole question of slavery."

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There is no investigation of the origin of the class-struggle in Greece, and a passing reference to the phratry, which is described as "a local organisation of the citizens" (p. 64) suggests that she does not understand the structure of tribal society. Nor is there any mention of the matriarchate, to which Marxists from Engels onwards have always attached great importance. She writes: "The Bronze Age states usually broke up after only about a hundred years" (p. 15, repeated on p. 249). The Egyptian kingdom lasted, apart from changes of dynasty, for close on three thousand years, and the urban civilisation of Minoan Crete, which she herself describes as "a typical Bronze Age state" (p. 17), for at least twelve hundred. While insisting on the importance of the alphabet in determining the distinctive character of Greek civilisation, she seems to be unaware that the Greeks learnt it from the Phoenicians (p. 41) and says that "in the scripts of the Bronze Age each symbol or picture represented an actual object" (p. 31). This is not true of the Minoan linear script, or the Egyptian hieratic, or the Mesopotamian cuneiform.

The chapter on the Athenian tyranny contains nothing new. The two chapters on the Spartan tyranny and the Roman intervention are the most substantial in the book. But the role of Philip V is not explained, and the motives of Roman policy are not related clearly to the contradictions inherent in a slave society. The treatment of slavery is confined to incidental observations, not always consistent, until we reach the last chapter, which raises the question "Why is modern society not based on slavery?" Instead of seeking the answer in the development of the productive forces the author offers an explanation which turns on the length of time involved in the decline of the Roman Empire as compared with the supposedly rapid decline of the Bronze Age states; a supposition which, as just noted, does not correspond to the facts.

Why does the author try to answer a difficult question which as an ancient historian she need not have asked? Because throughout the book ancient society is described in terms of modern society, passing through "feudalism" to a "bourgeois revolution" followed by the rise of "a new class of workers." Apart from the misuse of Marxist terminology, such comparisons may have an illustrative value, if used with caution, but here they are used so indiscriminately that they throw the reader into confusion. Theseus (who is presented without argument as a historical person) is compared with the chiefs of Wessex, Henry I, Louis XIV, and the kings of fifteenth-century Hungary; Solon with Henry VII; Pisistratus with Cromwell; Cleomenes with Napoleon; the restoration of the Corinthian oligarchy with the restoration of Charles II; and Sparta after the reforms of Lycurgus with seventeenth-century Japan. A section dealing ostensibly with Greek science in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. mentions Thales, Anaximander and Heraclitus, but not Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Parmenides, Anaxagoras or Hippocrates, and then hurries on to Thomas Aquinas, Durer, Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Bacon, John Dee, Newton, Evelyn, Locke, Ray, Kant, Hegel and the Royal College of Surgeons.

The author has attempted too much. With a firm grip of Marxist method and a more limited objective she may yet make a useful contribution to the subject.

GEORGE THOMSON.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

BOOKS

Smouldering Freedom, by Isabel de Palencia (Gollancz, 7s. 6d., 190 pp.).
Pity the Poor Rich, by "Yaffle" (Allen and Unwin, 6s., 127 pp.).
Old People, Survey Committee (B. Seebohm Rowntree, chairman) (Geoffrey Cumberlege (O.U.P.), 3s. 6d., 192 pp.).
The Darker the Night the Brighter the Stars, by F. Schlotterbeck (Gollancz, 7s. 6d., 250 pp.).
Osterreich 1848, by Ernst Fischer (Stern-Verlag, Wien, 206 pp.).

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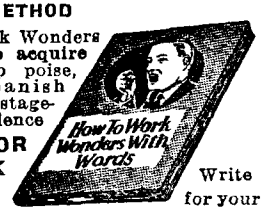

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